



**Testimony of Gustave Keach-Longo
Vice President of Senior Services, Community Renewal Team**

**Aging Committee, March 4, 2014
S.B 244- An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates**

Senator Ayala, Representative Serra, members of the Aging Committee:

My name is Gus Keach-Longo and I am Vice President of Senior Services for the Community Renewal Team. I joined CRT 10 years ago to open and operate The Retreat Assisted Living, one of the State Assisted Living Demonstration Pilots here in Harford. I am pleased to appear before you this morning to present testimony concerning Senate Bill 244 - An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates.

The Retreat was developed as one of four assisted living communities with the goal of saving the State Medicaid funds. The Assisted Living Demonstration Pilot was designed to blend the CT Home Care Program for the Elderly (CHCPE) with affordable housing to create a model of assisted living which is affordable to moderate and low-income seniors. The goal was to save the State of Connecticut funds by moving seniors on Medicaid out of nursing homes back to the community with services; similar to Money Follows the Person. According to the last quarterly update for Money Follows the Person, prepared by UCONN Health Center, 14% of participants have had a difficult time transitioning from a nursing home setting to the community due to lack of appropriate housing. The Retreat model provides the housing needed to help seniors avoid premature placement into long term care facilities when they are no longer safe to live on their own.

To date this new model of care has been very successful. In the nine years since The Retreat opened:

- The average annual savings to the State of Connecticut from The Retreat model versus nursing home placement is \$3.2M. Therefore we estimate a total savings to date of \$28.8M.
- 390 seniors have lived at The Retreat. Of those, 244 (or 63%) have come from nursing homes or avoided premature placement.

The population we serve at The Retreat looks like this:

- They are an average of 82 years old and receive over 17 of hours of care per week.
- Well over half of our seniors are without family support. They may be estranged from their families, or their relatives can't function as a family unit.
- 57 % have some type of mental health concern and benefit from living with others for camaraderie and on-site psychosocial support (e.g. day-to-day redirecting and mental health counseling).
- 3 % have experienced periods of homelessness.

Through the CHCPE, The Retreat receives a daily rate for what is called "Core Services." This includes housekeeping, linen, social programs and activities, transportation and emergency response system (i.e.



"Life Alert") system. The Core Services rate hasn't been increased since 2007 which affects the staff supporting those services.

With no increase in the provider rates in more than six years, we struggle to keep up with related expense increases. We run a tight operation and are as creative as possible to keep our expenses low. However we need people to care for people.

Cutting personnel expenses would directly impact the care we provide and the experience of our seniors. Therefore, we are asking for your help to increase our provider rate so we can continue providing the appropriate care to our seniors in our community.

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